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Head of School*

“Keeping In Touch”

April 2008

Dear Parents,

I am still in awe of the recent Kindergarten presentation titled “Three of a Kind.” This superb and enthusiastically performed musical once again lifted my spirit of renewal as to the unlimited benefits I personally receive from interacting daily with life-loving children, fully involved, talented teachers, and genuinely supportive parents. Using the theme, “Three of a Kind,” I will now share three items as part of my Keeping in Touch format as we continue our annual educational journey in this third and final trimester of this 60th Anniversary school year.

INSTITUTIONAL ASSESSMENT

Throughout my first year as Head of School, I have assessed St. Edmund’s Academy in the five primary areas of its configuration: mission/philosophy, curriculum, staffing, finance/operations, and governance. I first determined St. Edmund’s Academy’s expectations based upon by-laws, goals, written curriculum, etc., and then in each area determined what was actually happening in practice. This is certainly not a scientific methodology, but is empirically appropriate for this purpose.

So far I have shared my results, comments, and recommendations in the first three areas with the Board of Trustees at its regularly scheduled meetings. The remaining two reports will be presented in April and May. The trustees are committed to fulfilling their governance responsibilities and have been highly focused and engaged in the three assessments areas to date. In June, the Board has scheduled a special session to more clearly define the next steps in strengthening the institution in its service to youth. The teachers and staff have been routinely engaged in assisting with the assessment through setting strengthening goals and reviewing the current opportunities and approaches of our curriculum to achieve the best possible benefits to our students. We recognized the importance of clearly knowing what we are doing, why we are doing it, and how we are measuring the results in each student’s growth and development in the learning process. We have and will continue to identify items which need improvement, expanded assessment, and additional resources. Following the Board retreat in June, I will send you a report summarizing my assessment in each of the five areas as well as present adjustments and changes for the 2008-2009 school year. I have not found a description for the ideal school, and do not believe that one exists, nor have I discovered a panacea of educational practice, but one of the major goals of this process is to link by standards the School’s mission and theory with the practical realities of what education can and should be doing today and in the future learning of its students.

THE PROCESS OF STANDARDS LINKING

The assessment that I having been referring to throughout the year and in the above item entails the following components that respond to the question; what are the standards, evidence, and learning opportunities to which St. Edmund’s Academy is committed?

Current State

1. Who is currently teaching what standards and evidence?
2. What is the nature of instruction?
3. Who is currently assessing what standards and evidence? By what means?

Curriculum and Assessment Plan

1. Who is responsible for teaching what standards and evidence?
2. What should instruction look like?
3. What is to be assessed? By whom? By what means?

School Decisions

1. Through what courses, topics, and themes will the standards and evidence plan be taught and assessed?
2. Do all students have opportunities to be instructed and assessed in relation to the standards?

Resources

1. What is needed in the way of funding, expertise, and materials?

Professional Development Plan

1. What do teachers need to know and be able to do in order to teach and assess?
2. How will opportunities to address these needs be provided over time?

Supervision and Evaluation

1. What supports and feedback will teachers receive as they work to implement the curriculum?
2. Who is responsible for providing what?
3. What documentation is needed?

Student Profile

1. What assessment information will be kept on each student?

Comprehensive Assessment System

1. How will the curriculum be assessed?
2. What sources of data will be included?

Reporting

1. What information is needed by what SEA members/groups?
2. How will it be provided?

Action Plan

What do we need to do to improve student learning?

THE REVISED EVACUATION PLAN

A revised evacuation plan has been implemented. Following the first two fire drills in September, the need for an updated and reformulated plan became apparent. A Safety Committee was appointed with specific charges to address several areas surrounding safety and security. Even though the plan has been implemented, it is still a work in progress as changes and adjustments are being made through practice. A copy of the Evacuation Plan is available in the office to be reviewed by anyone interested. Once we have had sufficient practices to work through some “kinks,” a copy will be placed on the website. The Plan also includes a Lock Down procedure, which will be implemented in practice during the first week of May. The safety and well-being of all remains at the highest priority level, yet for anyone to state that the School has achieved zero risk in this area is not true and probably is not totally achievable. We wrestle daily with ways to improve safety and security and yet keep SEA a warm, caring, and welcoming place. Your recommendations and suggestions are truly appreciated in this and all other areas of our operation.

At the recent NAIS Conference, which Susan Miller and I attended, one of the keynote speakers ended his presentation to more than six thousand in attendance with the following:

It is our responsibility as educators to prepare students for their future, not our past.

Thank you for your continuing support of St. Edmund’s Academy and its students. We appreciate your partnership and remain devoted to sustaining it through a foundation of mutual respect, mutual confidence, and mutual trust.

William Kindler